

# **FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION GENERAL ORIENTATION GUIDE**

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The consent decree announcements for Fire Chief have not yet been approved by the USDOJ; however, candidates who wish to begin preparing for this examination may use the proposed Fire Chief Study Guide. If, in the unlikely event, changes to the guide are required by the USDOJ, these changes will be added to the website at a later date.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Department of Personnel has prepared this orientation guide for promotional candidates who will participate in the upcoming Fire Chief examination. The information in this booklet is designed to help candidates better understand the testing process and the types of questions they will encounter on the exam. This guide also offers a systematic method of study to help candidates prepare for the exam.

The exam will be designed on the basis of information obtained from job analyses of the position of Fire Chief in the State of New Jersey. The job analyses provide a description of the duties performed by incumbents and identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that are required to perform each of these duties effectively.

We encourage candidates to review this guide carefully and to take advantage of any and all opportunities to prepare for the exam.

**GOOD LUCK!**

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXAM

### A. Test Date, Time and Location

For specific information regarding the test date of the [current Fire Chief examination](#), please check the Department of Personnel's website.

Once you have been admitted to the examination, you will receive a Notification Card in the mail that shows the date, time, location and room to which you should report for your examination. Please bring the Notification Card, two forms of identification, two pencils, two pens and a highlighter with you to the Examination Center. One of the forms of identification must include your photograph. You will not be permitted to bring this Orientation Guide into the Examination Center. Make sure to map out a route in advance of your examination date and plan to arrive at the Examination Center early since no one will be admitted late.

### B. Test Security and Candidate Pledge

All candidates will be required to sign a pledge form at the examination center, stating that they understand the current examination will be administered over different days and that they will not discuss the content of the examination with any other person, study group, or potential make-up candidate. No one is permitted to take notes, or copy or remove test material during the administration of the examination.

Most candidates scheduled to take the Oral Assessment Exercises will be sequestered (held in a separate room) either prior to their scheduled test time or after they have taken the examination. This sequester period is required in order to prevent candidates who have taken the exam from interacting with candidates who are scheduled to take the same exam later in the day.

### C. Description of Test Format

A distinct examination has been developed for the title, Fire Chief. The examination will consist of five scenario-based oral questions. Each scenario was developed from a task or tasks that incumbents or supervisors of incumbents deemed important to job performance. Oral exam questions are designed to elicit responses that may be used to assess one's knowledge of these areas of importance. Candidates' responses are then evaluated by assessors who are trained to be fair and objective. They compare participant's performance to predetermined performance guidelines to determine who will perform effectively in a particular job.

This methodology is known to be a reliable and valid predictor of job success. For practical reasons, your fire department cannot promote everyone who is eligible for advancement and then see how they perform before making a final

selection decision. The next best approach, however, is to give eligible candidates a chance to demonstrate their knowledge as it related to real-life situations.

The Oral Assessment Exercises are designed to measure behaviors in the following knowledge areas as determined by New Jersey Fire Chiefs to be critical for effective performance:

1. Supervision – Delegation and Performance Goals
2. Supervision – Subordinate Incident/Interview
3. Fire Department Administration
4. Finance – Budget Preparation
5. Fire Ground Operations Management

#### D. Oral Assessment Scoring

The oral assessment scoring criteria have been determined prior to the examination administration date, by a panel of Subject Matter Experts using generally approved fire command, administrative and supervisory practices as well as reference materials. Scoring decisions are based on the situations that are presented. Only those oral responses, which depict relevant behaviors that are observable and can be quantified, will be assessed in the scoring process.

For each scenario (with the exception of the Finance – Budget Preparation scenario, which is only given a technical score), candidates are given two scores. A technical score, which is given by a fire subject matter expert and an oral communication score, which is given by a DOP representative trained in oral scoring.

Each of the technical and oral scores has an importance weighting as determined by the job analysis. Technical scores are given a weight of .1667 and oral scores are given a weight of .0416. All scores are standardized and only candidates with passing oral exam scores will have their overall test score weighted 70% and seniority score weighted 30% in determining the final score. Candidates will be ranked based upon this final score.

Please note that appointments made from the eligibility lists are conditional pending results of the appeal process.

### III. READING/ REFERENCE LIST

For specific information about the reading/reference list for the Fire Chief exam, please check the Department of Personnel's website for the [current Fire Chief examination](#).

### IV. HELPFUL HINTS

*Try Your Best* – The exercises are designed to be difficult. Perfection is not expected. Your overall evaluation is based on your performance on each exercise. Even if you feel as though you did poorly on one exercise, continue to try to do your best on the remaining exercises.

*The Exercises Are Set In A Hypothetical Fire Department* – This is done intentionally so as not to give an advantage to someone with a particular work background. Do not make assumptions about the hypothetical fire department or town. Take action and make decisions based only on the information that will be supplied to you.

*Tricks and Techniques* - Some candidates believe that by learning a collection of tricks and techniques they can guarantee a better examination score. Candidates are coached on how to project a favorable façade (to smile, be courteous, wear certain clothes, et cetera). They may rely on this to hide deficiencies in performance. Some candidates are taught that certain exercises have specific “tricks” associated with them. These tricks may consist of anything from techniques for organizing information, to statements and actions that should be done to get better scores. Developing strategies for how to attack a problem is a good test taking technique, in that an organized approach is better than a disorganized approach or no approach at all. Predetermined strategies are fine as a starting point but cannot take the place of true problem-solving skills of the critical thinking that can be applied to changing circumstances and demands, either in simulation exercises or in real-world events.

“Tricks and techniques” will only take a candidate so far. Tricks and techniques are not part of the scoring criteria. More importantly, tricks and techniques are poor substitutes for developing skills in supervision and management areas.

The question of how to best prepare as a candidate basically comes down to one question: “Is your focus going to be the learning of tricks and techniques, or are you, the candidate, going to work on actively preparing yourself for the position being tested?” There appears to be no substitute for the hard work and persistence required to advance one’s skills and knowledge levels.

## V. DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL POLICIES

### A. Make-Up Policy

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 4A: 4-2.9, make-up examinations for fire promotional examinations may be authorized only in cases of:

- I. Error by the Department of Personnel or appointing authority.
  - II. Death in the candidate's immediate family as evidenced by a copy of the death certificate; or
  - III. Catastrophic injury or illness requiring an extended convalescent period, provided the candidate submits a doctor's certification containing a diagnosis and a statement clearly showing that the candidate's physical condition precluded his or her participation in the examination as well as documentation from the candidate's employer noting the candidate's related leave from work.
- Military leave, which will be handled as stated in NJAC 4A:4-2.9(c).
  - Exoneration from pending disciplinary or criminal charges will be handled as stated in NJAC 4A:4-2.9(d).

If you require a make-up examination please call the Make-Up Unit at (609) 292-4144 within 5 days upon receipt of your Notification Card.

Please note that all requests for medical make up examinations must be accompanied by the Department of Personnel's Medical Authorization for Make-Up Examination form completed by the treating physician. The Medical Authorization for Make-Up Examination form can be obtained through the Make-Up Unit or can be printed from our website at [www.state.nj.us/personnel/forms/index.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/personnel/forms/index.htm).

### B. Post Examination Review Policy

A detailed review policy will be provided at the examination center. Subsequent to the date of the examination, candidates who participated in the oral assessment process will be provided the opportunity to review their examination scores upon receipt of an INELIGIBILITY/ELIGIBILITY NOTICE.

### C. Examination Cancellation Policy

In the event that circumstances force cancellation of the examination administration, the Department of Personnel will attempt to contact your department head, as soon as that decision has been made. In the case of inclement weather, please call DOP's Information Center to find out the status

of the examination or listen to your local radio station for further information. To contact the Department of Personnel's Information Center, call (609) 292-4144.

#### D. Study Groups

No "study group" has been involved in the development or review of Department of Personnel examinations and, at no time has any examination material been provided to such groups. Finally, the Department of Personnel is not responsible for any claims made by "study groups" or the manner in which they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

#### VI. Conclusion

This orientation guide attempts to familiarize Fire Chief candidates with certain selection instruments. Although some suggestions have been provided for test preparation, they are not exhaustive — we encourage candidates to engage in additional preparation strategies that will enhance their chances of performing effectively on the exam and on the job.

*We hope that each candidate has found this Orientation Guide to be beneficial.*



## VII. SAMPLE EXCERSICES

### **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

#### **Supervision – Delegation and Performance Goals**

You are the newly appointed Chief Officer. A new policy regarding Minimal Manning Requirements is being implemented in your jurisdiction. Because of this, your department will have to undergo a restructuring of its organization. In light of this, many of your employees, including some higher-level officers, are resisting the coming changes. You have met with your command staff and have decided to design and implement an Organizational Development Program for your department.

Based on the text Managing Fire Services, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and your experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: What are your first steps in implementing Minimal Manning Requirements using Organizational Development practices?**

**Question 2: How would you go about delegating the necessary assignments to completing the Organizational Development Program?**

In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Supervision - Subordinate Incident/Interview**

While responding to a fire alarm, one of your engine companies was involved in a motor vehicle accident. The police report and bystanders' statements suggest that the engine was traveling at an excessive rate of speed. It has been alleged that the driver was unable to control the vehicle. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but the engine was severely damaged. The deputy chief of this shift has recommended disciplinary action against the driver and the captain of the engine. Because both the driver and the captain are minorities, action against them may appear discriminatory. The minority fire fighters' association has informed you that it is against the disciplinary action because of the lack of driver training. It also states that "past practice" has not lead to disciplinary action when similar accidents occurred.

Based on the text the Fire Chief's Handbook and your experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: How would you conduct a full investigation of this matter?**

**Question 2: After completing your investigation, what actions would you take?**

In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Fire Department Administration**

As the Fire Chief, you are notified by the city fathers that they have entered into an agreement to hold an annual festival next summer in your community. It is to be a public private partnership with the local business association and the city. It will take place in the heart of the city's business district with (7) seven blocks of main street closed including a stage at one end, for three days, starting Friday with setup for vendors (food, craftspeople and the carnival style rides). There will be 20 vendors who will be using some form of cooking and heating. Saturday and Sunday will be actual festival days. The hours of operation are 10:00am to 8:00pm. The area is a mix of commercial and multi-family housing. You have been tasked with developing a plan for fire prevention and protection during the festival, including a cost estimate.

Based upon the reference Managing Fire Services, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and your own experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: What are your main concerns in developing a fire prevention plan for this festival?**

**Question 2: What would you do specifically to prepare for this event?**

**Question 3: How would you plan for the allocation of resources (money, manpower, etc)?**

In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Finance – Budget Preparation**

As the newly appointed chief of your department, you have been notified by your finance officer that she would like your input in the preparation of the budget for the new fiscal year. You have taken note that you will need to replace one of the front line pumpers due to age and frequent breakdowns, and you would like to replace this piece as soon as possible.

Based on the reference The Fire Chief's Handbook and your experience, answer the following questions:

**Question 1: How would you justify the need to purchase a new front line pumper and to whom would you present this justification?**

**Question 2: In order to make an educated, financially sound purchase, what steps would you take to prepare for the purchase, and what, if any, follow up would you do after the pumper was ordered?**

In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score.

Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL  
FIRE CHIEF EXAMINATION**

**Fire Ground Operations Management**

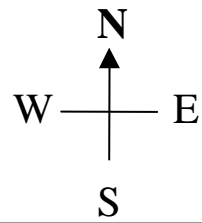
As Chief of Department, you are requested to respond to a serious row house fire at #58 Cedar Lane (a second alarm has been struck). The alarm was received at 08:30 hours on a Wednesday in October. The current temperature is 60 degrees and there is no wind factor. Water supply is adequate. When you arrive you are told that the Deputy Chief in charge was injured and taken to the hospital. The row is approximately 75 years old, is balloon frame construction, and is 3 stories with a common attic throughout. The fire started in the basement of the middle unit. You notice that companies appear to be operating in an uncoordinated manner.

Based on the text Fire Officers Handbook of Tactics, 2nd edition and your knowledge, what actions would you take to gain control of this emergency?



In responding to the questions, be as specific as possible. Do not assume or take for granted that general actions will contribute to your score.

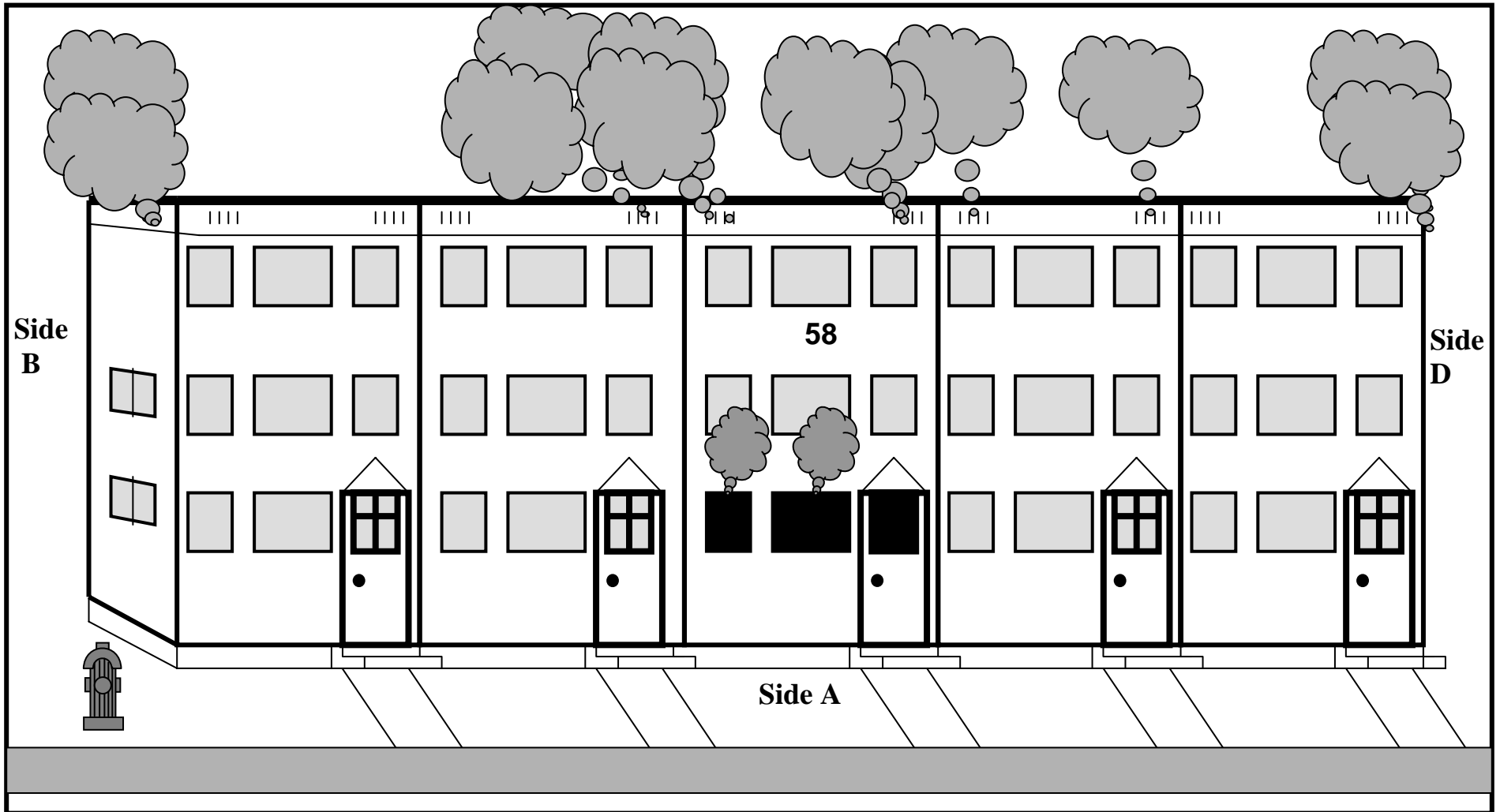
Please note that you must answer ALL questions within the 10 minute response period.

**Fire Chief Exam**  
**Scenario: Row House**  
**Diagram 1 of 2**  
*Front View*

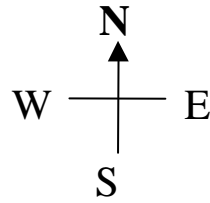


No Wind

Key:  Fire Hydrant  
 Smoke



**Fire Chief Exam**  
**Scenario: Row House**  
**Diagram 2 of 2**  
*Overhead View*



No Wind

Key:



Fire Hydrant

